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And do we then lament so very seldom?

Let's reckon now, and see if we can tell!

We weep throughout the fast-day of Atonement,  
The rich and poor, the young and old as well.

We weep o'er Lamentations and Confession,

We weep the daylight and the darkness through,  
And are we not to laugh a little ever?

Go, let us be! why, that would never do!

They've laughed in years gone by, and in the future

To laugh they will continue, just so long  
As there shall live a Jew—then hush, be silent,  
My song, my melancholy song!

“FOR THE SIN OF . . . GRANT US  
FORGIVENESS!”

ONCE again, in spirit,  
Living o'er my childhood,  
On the solemn fast-day  
By the wall I stand,  
Dressed in snow-white linen,  
Hungry, aye, and thirsty,  
With the old, the heavy  
Prayer-book in my hand.

And with tears and fervour:  
“For the sin” repeating,  
Missing nothing, from the  
First word to the last,  
All the while, tho', feeling  
Most as I were dreaming,  
Most, as I were lying  
Bound in slumber fast.

"For the sin" . . come, quicker!  
 'Tis my father speaking,  
 And I lift the prayer-book,  
 Read them one by one,  
 Sins, by tens I count them,  
 And misdeeds so many,  
 Wicked things I never,  
 Nevermore have done!

God of mine almighty!  
 I, a child in Israel,  
 I, a little, sickly  
 Jewish boy, oh, say:  
 How can I be guilty  
 Of such dark misdoings,  
 Who misdeeds so dreadful  
 To my charge can lay?

Usury, extortion—  
 Three misdeeds and forty—  
 I, a little Jew! well,  
 Rattle it along!  
 Ah, too big and heavy  
 Is for me the Pray'r book,  
 And the fast-day portion,  
 "For the sin . ." too long!

Days, and months, and seasons  
 Since have come and vanished,  
 I have altered with them,  
 I am bent and old,  
 And my head is sprinkled  
 With the snows of winter,  
 On my heart's faint beating  
 Fall the night-dews cold.

Yes, the little school-boy  
 To a Jew has changèd—

In my lonely chamber  
Pensively I lie,  
Thoughts of gloom and sadness  
Gathering within me,  
Like the clouds at evening  
In a stormy sky.

I, dear people Israel,  
Will thy life consider,  
Prying into corners,  
Searching, thinking o'er  
All our deep and tender  
Brotherly affection,  
Year by year increasing,  
Strengthened more and more :

All our benefactors,  
And our wealthy leaders,  
In whose flood of riches  
We are more than blest ;  
All our learned Rabbis,  
Counsellors and judges,  
Schools and Talmud-Torahs,  
Temples, and the rest :

Our untarnished honour,  
Our sincere attachment  
To the name we're called by,  
And which we have borne,  
Cherished years three thousand,  
Deeming it a treasure  
To be saved and sheltered  
From the breath of scorn ;

Lest it should be injured,  
Spoken of with slighting—  
And I take the pray'r-book,  
Heavy, worn with age,

'Tis the same—and open  
 At the fast-day portion:  
 "For the sin . ." is written  
 On the yellowed page . . .  
 How is this, my brothers?  
 Oh, this topsy-turvy  
 World!—in truth I know not  
 If to cry or laugh!  
 Tell me, what has happened  
 To the list, the long one?  
 This one—why, God help us!  
 'Tis too short by half!

### THREE FRIENDS.

THREE neighbours were we, three companions, I ween  
 That nowadays rarely our like may be seen—  
 The red-haired Eliakim, Nachman, and I,  
 The poet who humbly to please you will try.

We grew up together, we learned side by side  
 The law that is Israel's comfort and guide,  
 Together we sported, we prayed all together,  
 Alike for all three were the wind and the weather.

Together we settled to live evermore,  
 Till we met beyond parting on Eden's glad shore.

And now will I tell you what happened one day,  
 When down to the wood we had taken our way.

We brandished three pointed and glittering knives,  
 As long as the Angel's who gathers our lives.

To murder, to rob? why, good friend, how you shiver!  
 To cut willow-branches alongside the river.

The rays from the West, growing long now and cold,  
 Illumined a willow-tree crooked and old.